

Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee  
Engineering Subcommittee Meeting  
Thursday, February 16, 2023

Members present: Leisa Meeuwen-Ristuben, Raina Urton, Julia Curran, Matt Steinrueck, Andrew Frenz, Kadence Novak

Staff present: Andrew Degerstrom

Leisa called the meeting to order at 4:34pm.

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board staff Emma Pachuta presented the MPRB Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles. The presentation primarily centered on updates to the Cedar Lake portion of the Master Plan. These updates pertained to the paved paths currently in place and plans to formalize desire paths on the northeast side of Cedar Lake. After the staff presentation, PAC members made comments and asked questions.

Andrew: Can you clarify, are all of the white dotted lines shown to the northeast of Cedar Lake proposed informal trails that are proposed to become formalized soft-surface trails? Was there much discussion about the pros and cons of formalizing these trails, widening them and their impact on the setting and feeling of the space?

Emma: Yes, and there was significant debate and interest in that question. Many people currently like the secluded feeling of the area and the informal winding trails, but ultimately we landed on the side of accessibility. While we know soft-surface trails will never be fully accessible, doing work to level and widen the trails will make them more easily accessible to more park users.

Andrew: Can you clarify the orange dashed line shown to the east of that area?

Emma: Yes, that's a proposed unpaved bike trail through the wooded area. We received a lot of feedback that conflict between bikes and walkers on the informal trails in the area is a problem today. In formalizing the trails, we will be signing them as pedestrian trails. So we are proposing a dedicated soft-surface bike trail through the woods as well. We learned that a lot of mountain bikers go through this area to access the mountain bike parks by Brownie Lake and in Theodore Wirth.

Andrew: And last, the hatched area further to the northeast, where the old rail yards are, what's proposed for that area? Is it not owned by MPRB? It looks like you are proposing to formalize the trail through there to Kenwood Park?

Emma: That property is not owned by MPRB, though we do hope to acquire it in the future. We know there are other informal trails through the woods there too. We don't have a plan for what to do there at this time.

Julia: Why is there a path missing along the southeast corner of Cedar Lake? This is a major problem.

Emma: As part of this plan, we are proposing to restore the shoreline and habitat in this area, but not to add a new trail. We looked very closely at adding a trail here, but there were a few pinch points where land acquisition would probably be needed. Constructing the bridge to go over the channel was the biggest problem. Fitting in the approaches that would be needed in order to have enough clearance under the bridge that is needed for watercraft, which includes emergency watercraft, was a problem. It's something we want to work out, but can't bring forward now.

Julia: I understand the issues with the bridge. Not having public access to this shoreline is a big issue. It would be nice to see a path put in, even if it is a dead end for now.

Andrew: With the shoreline restoration, is it fair to say that this project moves in the direction of making a change to the character of that space that makes it more apparently public property rather than appearing like private property? That this shifts perception and prepares for a future path? Is the plan explicit about calling for a future path in this area?

Emma: Yes, that's accurate. As part of the shoreline restoration, we will also be removing all of the existing unpermitted private encroachments that are on the MPRB property in that area today. There is language about a future path, but we could probably work to make it more clear.

Leisa: We'll need to write a new resolution and should look at our previous resolution as a starting point.

Minneapolis Public Works staff Kristian Zimmerman presented the Vision Zero Capital Program 2023 Corridors. The presentation provided an overview of improvement projects slated for this year along with a brief overview of the types of improvements within the program's scope. After the staff presentation, PAC members made comments and asked questions.

Julia: Can you clarify what the purple-marked streets on the map represent?

Kristian: The streets marked in purple are streets that were formerly identified as high injury but are not identified as high injury today. So we are monitoring them more closely still, mostly to understand how improvements are working, but aren't looking to prioritize improvements to them like current high-injury streets.

Andrew: Are you going to be coming back to us for feedback once you've selected specific treatments for these street segments?

Kristian: No. There is a website where we accept feedback on specific elements for these projects via an interactive map. The interactive map for the 2023 segments is not live yet but will be soon.

Julia: Can you speak to the budget for this program and how it handles ongoing maintenance for these treatments? Can you talk about how you are monitoring the completed street segments and what is and isn't working?

Kristian: The vision zero budget covers the installation of the treatments, but once they're installed, they are turned over to our traffic division and they are responsible for the ongoing maintenance. So maintenance is funded out of traffic's normal maintenance budget. As time has gone on, we have made some changes to our bollard design and the geometry of some of our bump outs so that they work better for everyone and reduce maintenance costs. For example, in the installations that were completed in the second half of 2022, we used a different type of bollard in certain locations, usually at the apex of the turn on curb bump outs and for all of our hardened centerlines. It has a different design with a spring in the base that allows it to take a greater number of hits from vehicles and more direct hits from larger vehicles like trucks, without breaking and requiring replacement. So we are learning and making changes to reduce maintenance costs. We do have an evaluation team that does go observe the installations after they are complete and makes changes as needed. Also, when the program first started we partnered with a U of M research team who studied driver behavior and gave us good data.

Raina: Can you speak to how the budget for this program has or has not changed over time?

Kristian: The budget has varied. We ended up with some funding left over at the end of 2022. Our funding in 2023 went down from 2022, but since we have the extra funding from last year, we have about the same amount to work with. The future budget is under discussion, there is definitely a lot of interest and people are aware that we have a lot of work to do if we are going to get to our goal of zero deaths by 2027.

Julia: How do people give feedback? Are you getting feedback from the people who are using these streets?

Kristian: The Vision Zero website is a good place. There is a web page for each corridor with contact info for the project manager. We get a lot of feedback through this channel. When we do an installation we put up yard signs along the corridor with a QR code and URL for the project page.

Julia: Do you ask leading questions to prompt the type of feedback that is most helpful? What kind of feedback are you getting?

Kristian: We get most of our feedback right after an installation is complete, in the first couple weeks as people are adjusting to changes. We get a lot of questions about what's going on and why.

JoNette Kuhnau with Kimley-Horn presented the METRO B Line/Lake Street Pedestrian Improvements project. The scope of the presentation covered the Lake Street bikeway and pedestrian access changes between Bde Maka Ska Parkway and Dupont Avenue South. After the staff presentation, PAC members made comments and asked questions.

Andrew: The change at Dupont is a big improvement, the island there today is unusual, sort of a reverse dog leg. It's good to see that gone and a new layout that reduces crossing distances and forces northbound drivers to slow down. The intersection is missing at least two crossings that should be added, probably three. The ped ramps and crossings at the Dupont and Lagoon intersection should be added for people to cross Lagoon there. Ideally there should also be a single crossing from the northeast corner of the intersection over to the corner by The Asher. That intersection is inconvenient now as it requires waiting two light cycles in order to cross what is really just one street, and we should fix that. I also had a question about the two three-way intersections in this area. At Knox, you are proposing to provide curb bump outs and ped ramps, but at Holmes, no improvements are proposed at all and there is no existing crossing infrastructure. Why are these treated differently?

JoNette: At Knox, today there are no curb ramps at all, if you tried to cross the street they aren't there. We are proposing to add them with the new bike facility and the bike facility and median also shortens the crossing. At Holmes there were a number of issues, but the biggest concern with making changes at Holmes was whether those changes would be incompatible with a future extension of the bike facility from Humboldt to Hennepin. Because we don't know what that section of the bikeway would look like, we didn't want to make changes there that could potentially create a conflict when that moves forward.

Andrew: Along Lagoon west of Hennepin the sidewalks are extremely narrow, plus there are some obstructions. I think they are substandard, they're certainly very unpleasant. You mentioned that a big part of this project was improving ADA compliance in this area, can you speak to the sidewalks on that section of Lagoon and ADA compliance?

JoNette: Yes, the sidewalks on both sides of Lagoon in that area are extremely narrow. It doesn't show up very well in this image, but if you look closely you can see that we are proposing to taper the curb line in some locations because it is needed in order to provide the space needed for the ped ramp approaches. Lagoon is somewhat unique in that the parking on the south side of the street is part time and located in the traffic lane. So our ability to even do curb bump outs is extremely limited.

Andrew: Last, what are you proposing beyond bump outs to improve safety at the unsignalized intersections?

JoNette: At the unsignalized intersections the focus is really on reducing crossing distances with the bump outs, we are not proposing new signals or beacons or anything else beyond that.

Andrew: That's very disappointing to hear. Right now, the unsignalized intersections in this area are very unsafe. Drivers are almost all driving too fast, most do not yield. Shortened crossing distances are insufficient. All of the intersections in this corridor deserve safe crossings, but the Lake & Fremont and Lagoon & Fremont intersections especially are a major safety problem today. Target is a significant driver of all-day pedestrian traffic, along with all the other businesses in the area, and those intersections are currently extremely unsafe.

Jasna: One update I can provide is that we have recently been discussing the unsignalized intersections with our traffic division, and they have agreed that they will eventually look at evaluating these for future signals. We will be adding the installation of conduit to this project to accommodate potential future signals, though the signals would not be part of this project.

Matt: When was the last time that this section of Lake was reconstructed? I know that Lake east of Dupont was reconstructed not that long ago, but when was the last time this section was reconstructed, and is a reconstruction planned?

Jasna: A reconstruction is not planned. The county does not have the same type of reconstruction program as the city. Unsure when the last time it was reconstructed.

Andrew: I can say there are areas where granite pavers are visible at the bottom of potholes on this stretch, if that gives an idea as to how long it's been.

Julia: I echo Andrew's comments. Holmes is a high-volume pedestrian crossing that a lot of people do use despite there being no ped ramps or other crossing infrastructure and is also too dangerous today. The speeds are too high and have often resulted in damage. The southwest corner of the Lake & Humboldt intersection in particular I can remember has been reconstructed multiple times in my lifetime due to damage from vehicles. The fact that this section of Lake and Lagoon leads to/from what is essentially a highway on/off ramp along the north side of Bde Maka Ska is a major contributor to the problem. We've removed pedestrian infrastructure in that area and allowed high speeds and the result is that drivers go into highway mode where they aren't thinking about pedestrians. The sidewalks on Lagoon need to be revisited. That section of Lagoon is one of the worst places to be in Minneapolis in a wheelchair, especially in winter. I know part of that problem is the sidewalks and part of it is how the county plows, but as it is it's difficult to pass others on foot, let alone in a wheelchair. I hope the overnight parking ban on Lake is also reconsidered. The ban leads to empty parking spaces overnight which makes for a wider effective roadway that invites even more dangerous speeding. Removing the overnight parking ban would result in residents parking on Lake overnight and calming traffic some. Early in the Covid-19 pandemic, one traffic lane on Lagoon was opened for walking and it was such a change and an improvement. The current allocation of space feels very wrong. Any chance to add back the walking space that was available in 2020 should be taken. I am also concerned about the Dupont & Lagoon intersection, it seems like it invites drivers from southbound Dupont to turn westbound on Lagoon too quickly and creates a dangerous situation.

Raina: I agree with all of the previous comments. This project has a lot of good things, but also a lot of things that we should be concerned about too. Can you consider raised crosswalks for some of the unsignalized intersections? If you can't do signals, can you do something?

JoNette: Due to county and state requirements, a raised crosswalk on this section of Lake or Lagoon would have to have a very gradual profile, somewhat like the existing midblock crosswalk on the 3000 block of Hennepin, which is not very noticeable. The profile of a typical raised crosswalk you might see on a neighborhood street could not be allowed on Lake or Lagoon. One area where we could consider a

raised crosswalk would be crossing Dupont on the north side of Lagoon, where Julia pointed out concerns.

Andrew: Even if you can't do raised crosswalks, you can still do crosswalks. I know the county has said that they don't want to put in crosswalks on Lake at unsignalized intersections, but you have to do something. Drivers here are unsafe and do not follow the law and yield and something has to change. If we can't do raised crosswalks and can't afford signals, there are cheaper options out there that can be used. Marked crosswalks, hardened lanes, signage. You need to do more. As Julia mentioned, part of the problem is the adjacent section of Lake which is essentially a highway along the north side of the lake. This maybe isn't the right time to ask this, but I saw that section of Lake was shown on the vision zero map earlier today as a high injury street with major planned improvements, but I haven't heard about those improvements. Can anyone speak to that?

JoNette: The county is reconstructing the intersection of Lake and West Bde Maka Ska Parkway, and along with that they are rebuilding the median between West Bde Maka Ska Parkway and Thomas. The median will be wider. There are currently 13' and 14' lanes there, and the widened median will narrow them, so that should have some impact on vehicle speed.

Minneapolis Public Works Staff Jasna Hadzic-Stanek presented the Green Central Safe Routes to School project. Along with design changes that factored in PAC feedback from the previous presentation, new crossing design concepts were shown for 34th and 10th. After the staff presentation, PAC members made comments and asked questions.

Andrew: This is a great project, and the new version of the 34th & Portland intersection is really impressive. Is this the largest individual curb bump out that's been built anywhere in the city? I'm excited to see this. Regarding the options for the 34th & 10th intersection, is there a significant difference in cost between the options? Would picking one be likely to have an impact on what happens with other elements fit into the project budget?

Jasna: We don't have specific costs for these options, there would probably be some differences.

Kristian: Yes, there would be some difference, but ultimately the difference in cost would be unlikely to impact the budget in such a way that it would change what other components are included.

Andrew: If that's the case, my vote would be for the third option and the narrowed crossing distance.

Julia: I prefer the third option too. The 13' crossing distance is good especially for kids, who can't judge vehicle speed as well as adults. A 13' street width like this is what I would like to see everywhere really, but especially in this case it feels kid-sized and appropriate.

Raina: I agree and prefer the shorter crossing distance, unless the raised crosswalk option could be a huge rise, taller than most of our raised crosswalks.

Leisa: We had a question from one of our members via email who wasn't able to make it today about lowering the speed limit in this corridor and whether that would be possible?

Jasna: Yes, I remember that question from last time. Since the last time I was here, I talked with traffic, and the section by the school is actually supposed to be 15mph, but the signage is missing. So as part of this project we will be putting that signage back up. It's 15mph from 4th Avenue west.

Julia: And what about lowering the speed limit along the entire route?

Kristian: That would be a major undertaking, along the lines of the process we went through when we made the citywide 20mph switch a few years ago.

Leisa asked for volunteers to assist with drafting resolutions. Andrew volunteered to draft the resolution for the METRO B Line/Lake Street Pedestrian Improvements project, and Matt and Raina volunteered to help. Leisa will look at the previous resolution for the MPRB Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles to see what updates should be made, and will also draft a new resolution for the Green Central Safe Routes to School project.

Leisa adjourned the meeting at 6:09pm.